

## Excerpt from Benjamin Franklin's Memoir about Peace Negotiations, 1818-1819

May 8th, 1782

We set out accordingly the Next Morning in my Coach, from Passy, and arrived punctually at M. de Vergennes's, who received Mr. Grenville in the most cordial and friendly manner, on Account of the Acquaintance and Friendship that had formerly subsisted between his Uncle and M. de Vergennes, when they were Ambassadors together at Constantinople. After some little agreeable Conversation, Mr. Grenville presented his Letter, from Mr. Secretary Fox and another I think from the Duke of Richmond. When these were read, the Subject of Peace was centred on. What my memory retains of the Discourse amounts to little more than this, that after mutual Declarations of the good Dispositions of the two Courts, Mr. Grenville having intimated that in Case England gave America Independence, France it was expected would return the Conquests she had made of British Islands, receiving back those of Miquelon and St. Pierre; and that the Original Object of the War being obtained, it was supposed that France would be contented with that. The Minister seem'd to smile at the propos'd Exchange; and remarked that the offer of giving Independence to America amounted to little: America, says he, does not ask it of you: There is Mr. Franklin, he will answer you as to that Point. To be sure, I said, we do not consider ourselves as under any Necessity of bargaining for a Thing that is our own, and which we have bought at the Expense of so much Blood and Treasure, and which we are in full Possession of.— As to our being satisfied with the original Object of the War, continued he, look back to the Conduct of your Nation in former Wars. In the last War, for Example, what was the Object? It was the disputed Right to some waste Lands on the Ohio and the Frontiers of Nova-Scotia. Did you content yourselves with the Recovery of those Lands? No, you retained at the Peace all Canada, all Louisiana, all Florida, Grenada and other West-India Islands, the greatest Part of the Northern Fisheries, with all your Conquests in Africa, and the East Indies.— Something being mentioned of its not being reasonable that a Nation after making an unprovoked unsuccessful War upon its Neighbours, should expect to sit down whole and have every thing restor'd which she had lost in such a War, I think Mr. Grenville remarked that the War had been provok'd by the Encouragement given by France to the Americans to revolt. On which M. de Vergennes grew a little warm, and declared firmly, that the Breach was made and our Independence declared long before we received the least Encouragement from France; and he defied the World to give the smallest Proof of the contrary. There sits, says he, Mr. Franklin who knows the Fact and will contradict me if I do not speak the Truth. He repeated to Mr. Grenville what he had before said to Mr. Oswald respecting the King's Intention of treating fairly, and keeping faithfully the Convention he should enter into; of which Disposition he would give at the Treaty convincing Proofs, by the Fidelity and Exactitude with which he should observe his Engagements with his present Allies; and added that the Points which the King had chiefly in View were Justice and Dignity, these he could not depart from. He acquainted Mr. Grenville that he should immediately write to Spain and Holland, communicate to those Courts what had past, and request their Answers, that in the mean time he hoped Mr. Grenville would find means of amusing himself

agreeably (sic), to which he should be glad to contribute, that he would communicate what had pass'd to the King; and he invited him to come again the next day.

On our Return Mr. G. expressed himself as not quite satisfied with some part of M. de Vergennes Discourse, and was thoughtful. He told me that he had brought two State Messengers with him, and perhaps after he had had another interview with the Minister, he might dispatch one of them to London: I then requested leave to answer by that Opportunity the Letters I had received from Lord Shelburne and Mr. Fox; and he kindly promised to acquaint me in time of the Messenger's Departure.— He did not ask me to go with him the next day to Versailles, and I did not offer it.

The coming and going of these Gentlemen was observed, and made much Talk at Paris: And the Marquis de la Fayette having learnt something of their Business from the Ministers, discoursed with me about it. Agreeable to the Resolutions of Congress, directing me to confer with him and take his Assistance in our Affairs, I communicated to him what had past. He told me that during the Treaty at Paris for the last Peace, the Duke de Nivernois had been sent to reside in London, that this Court might through him state what was from time to time transacted, in the Light they thought best, to prevent Misrepresentations and Misunderstandings. That such an Employ would be extremely agreeable to him on many Accounts; that as he was now an American Citizen, spoke both Languages and was well acquainted with our Interests, he believed he might be useful in it; and that as Peace was likely from Appearances to take Place, his Return to America was perhaps not so immediately necessary. I liked the Idea and encouraged his proposing it to the Ministry. He then wish'd I would make him acquainted with Messrs. Oswald & Grenville, and for that End proposed meeting them at Breakfast with me, which I promis'd to contrive if I could, and endeavour to engage them for Saturday.